



### **Farmers Markets - When is Enough, Enough & Who is Overseeing their Growth?**

In 1989, there were 60 farmers markets in California, today there are over 500. Unfortunately, during roughly that same time the number of farms in California and the number of acres farmed decreased. Still, it seems like every community is demanding their very own farmers market. We're not surprised. Customers love you and your products. You're in high demand and short supply!

This surge highlights the success of farmers markets and the growing public demand for fresh local food. It's the ultimate win-win relationship; the family farm is successful and the eater is healthy and happy. The problem is that the number of small family farms is not increasing at the same rate of consumer demand. This means the farmer is now in a position of power when it comes to deciding which markets to attend and it's more important than ever that farmers make smart business decisions.

MFM's goal is to create the most successful farmers markets for you to market your product. WE NEED YOUR HELP because your success is primary to the success of this industry as a whole. When a farmer sets up booths at competing markets on the same day, same hours, within minutes of one another both markets suffer. MFM has noticed that this scenario splits your customer base and your sales, over-extends your business, and threatens the success of all markets. We'd like to encourage you the farmer, food purveyor, or artisan to ask the following questions before starting a new market:

- Does the market compete directly with a market I attend?
- What is the cost-benefit of joining this market? Will this new market increase my bottom line or am I doubling my costs while splitting my sales between two markets?
- How is the market promoted? How does the market advertise? On site signs and visibility?
- Is the organization that is managing the market truly a non-profit with 501(c) IRS status? (Note: there are many organizations that are "California Not-for-Profit Mutual Benefit Corporations" who have not taken the important next step of filing with the IRS for their non-profit 501(c) status.)

MFM's primary goal is to support regional small family farms by facilitating excellent farmers markets. We thank you for your continued support of our organization and look forward to growing together as the local food movement thrives. We invite you to visit our website to explore what's new at MFM including our monthly e-newsletter, Eat Local 101, special events, educational advertising campaigns, and helpful resources for you to better manage your business (Markets/Applications/Grow Your Business).

## **Evaluating New Market Opportunities**

Marin Farmers Markets believes in “quality over quantity” when it comes to running farmers markets. For the last 5 years, MFM’s focus has been on growing its seven markets in Marin and Alameda Counties to be the best most productive markets for our members rather than opening new markets.

MFM Board & Staff is very careful when exploring a possible new market. In fact we’ve turned down over 30 market opportunities over the past few years. Because we’re looking for truly excellent market opportunities for our members, there are a number of different factors we consider, including:

- Is this community truly in need of a farmers market, or is it already being served?
- Is there room to grow, accessible public transportation & ample parking?
- Is there strong community support among potential shoppers and the host organization?